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REVIEWS

LINGUISTIC PUBLICATIONS OF THE BUREAU
OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY, A GENERAL
REVIEW

IF only by virtue of its historical position, the Bureau of American Ethnology is easily the most prominent American institution engaged in scientific research and publication on the ethnology, archæology, physical anthropology, and linguistics of the natives of America, particularly of the tribes north of Mexico. For linguistic students there is cause for congratulation that from the very first the Bureau has devoted a considerable share of its attention to the study of the languages of these tribes. For this policy they must ever remain thankful to the founder of the Bureau, J. W. Powell, who, though not a linguist, clearly perceived the value of linguistic data to Americanistic studies. He himself set the ball rolling with his "Introduction to the Study of Indian Languages," published in 1877. Since then there has been a steady stream of Bureau linguistic publications, of varying interest and importance, but, on the whole, of constantly increasing merit, until the total output has reached the respectable figure of well-nigh ten thousand printed pages. It is now just forty years since the Bureau, or rather its immediate government precursor, published the "Introduction" referred to, so that this would seem to be an appropriate enough time to get a bird's-eye view of the whole linguistic output. A specific review of each and every publication would be both useless and impossible, but perhaps a few general impressions may not be without value. The publications themselves are listed in the following bibliography.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BUREAU PUBLICATIONS IN
AMERICAN INDIAN LINGUISTICSI. *General*

1. POWELL, J. W. Introduction to the Study of Indian Languages, with Words, Phrases and Sentences to be collected (Washington, BBAE, Government Printing Office, 1877 : 1-104; 2d edition, 1880 : 1-228).
2. DORSEY, J. O.; GATSCHET, A. S.; and RIGGS, S. R. Illustration of the Method of Recording Indian Languages (RBAE 1 [1881] : 579-589).
3. POWELL, J. W. On the Evolution of Language, as exhibited in the Specialization of the Grammatic Processes, the Differentiation of the Parts of Speech, and the Integration of the Sentence; from a Study of Indian Languages (*Ibid.*, 1-16).
4. — Philology, or the Science of Activities designed for Expression (RBAE 20 [1903] : cxxxix-clxx).
5. BOAS, FRANZ. Introduction (Handbook of American Indian Languages, BBAE 40 [pt. 1, 1911] : 1-83).

II. *Bibliography*

6. PILLING, J. C. Catalogue of Linguistic Manuscripts in the Library of the Bureau of Ethnology (RBAE 1 [1881] : 553-577).
7. — Proof-sheets of a Bibliography of the Languages of the North American Indians (Distributed only to collaborators) (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1885 : 1-1135).
8. — Bibliography of the Siouan Languages (BBAE 5 [1887] : 1-87).
9. — Bibliography of the Eskimo Language (BBAE 1 [1887] : 1-116).
10. — Bibliography of the Iroquoian Languages (BBAE 6 [1888] : 1-208).
11. — Bibliography of the Muskogean Languages (BBAE 9 [1889] : 1-114).
12. — Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages (BBAE 13 [1891] : 1-614).
13. — Bibliography of the Athapaskan Languages (BBAE 14 [1892] : 1-125).
14. — Bibliography of the Salishan Languages (BBAE 16 [1893] : 1-86).
15. — Bibliography of the Wakashan Languages (BBAE 19 [1894] : 1-70).

16. — Bibliography of the Chinookan Languages (including the Chinook Jargon) (BBAE 15 [1893] : 1-81).

III. Texts

17. GATSCHET, A. S. The Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon (Texts, CNAE 2 [pt. 1, 1890] : 13-197).
 18. DORSEY, J. O. The Cegiha Language (CNAE 6 [1890] : 1-794).
 19. — Omaha and Ponka Letters (BBAE 11 [1891] : 1-127).
 20. MOONEY, J. The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees (Specimen Formulas, RBAE 7 [1891] : 344-397).
 21. RIGGS, S. R. (ed. by J. O. Dorsey). Dakota Grammar, Texts, and Ethnography (Texts, CNAE 9 [1893] : 81-152).
 22. BOAS, FRANZ. Chinook Texts (BBAE 20 [1894] : 1-278).
 23. — Kathlamet Texts (BBAE 26 [1901] : 1-251).
 24. — Tsimshian Texts (BBAE 27 [1902] : 1-220).
 25. HEWITT, J. N. B. Iroquoian Cosmology (RBAE 21 [1903] : 141-339).
 26. SWANTON, J. R. Haida Texts and Myths, Skidegate Dialect (Texts, BBAE 29 [1905] : 7-109).
 27. RUSSELL, F. The Pima Indians (Linguistics [Songs and Speeches], RBAE 26 [1908] : 269-389).
 28. SWANTON, J. R. Tlingit Myths and Texts (Texts, BBAE 39 [1909] : 252-415).
 29. DORSEY, J. O.; and SWANTON, J. R. A Dictionary of the Biloxi and Ofo Languages, accompanied with 31 Biloxi Texts and Numerous Biloxi Phrases (Texts, BBAE 47 [1912] : 13-116).

IV. Lexical Material

30. DALL, W. H. Terms of Relationship used by the Innuits: a Series obtained from Natives of Cumberland Inlet (Appendix, CNAE 1 [pt. 1, 1877] : 117-119).
 31. GIBBS, GEORGE; and DALL, W. H. Comparative Vocabularies (Tribes of the Extreme Northwest) (Appendix, CNAE 1 [pt. 1, 1877] : 121-153).
 32. GIBBS, GEORGE. Dictionary of the Niskwalli (Niskwalli-English and English-Niskwalli) (Appendix, CNAE 1 [pt. 2, 1877] : 285-361).
 33. GIBBS, G.; TOLMIE, W. F.; and MENGARINI, G. Tribes of Western Washington and Northwestern Oregon; Vocabularies (Appendix, CNAE 1 [pt. 2, 1877] : 247-283).
 34. POWERS, STEPHEN. Tribes of California; Appendix, Linguistics (Appendix, CNAE 3 [1877] : 439-613).
 35. BOAS, F. The Central Eskimo (Glossary, RBAE 6 [1888] : 659-666).

36. GATSCHET, A. S. The Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon (CNAE 2 [pt. 2, 1890] : 1-705).
 37. RIGGS, STEPHEN R. (ed. by J. O. Dorsey). A Dakota-English Dictionary (CNAE 7 [1890] : 1-665).
 38. HOFFMAN, W. J. The Menomini Indians (Vocabulary, RBAE 14 [1896] : 294-328).
 39. MOONEY, J. The Ghost-Dance Religion (Arapaho Glossary, RBAE 1012-1023; Cheyenne Glossary, 1039-1042; Paiute Glossary, 1056, 1057; Sioux Glossary, 1075-1078; Kiowa Glossary, 1088-1091; Caddo Glossary, 1102-1103).
 40. — Calendar History of the Kiowa (The Kiowa Language, RBAE 17 [1898] : 389-439).
 41. TRUMBULL, JAMES H. Natick Dictionary (BBAE 25 [1903] : 1-349).
 42. DORSEY, J. O.; and SWANTON, J. R. A Dictionary of the Biloxi and Ofo Languages, accompanied with 31 Biloxi Texts and Numerous Biloxi Phrases (Dictionary and Phrases, BBAE 47 [1912] : 117-340).
 43. BYINGTON, CYRUS (ed. by J. R. Swanton and H. S. Halbert). A Dictionary of the Choctaw Language (BBAE 46 [1915] : 1-611).

V. Grammatical Material

44. FURUHELM, J. (communicated to G. Gibbs). Notes on the Natives of Alaska (Appendix, CNAE 1 [pt. 1, 1877] : 111-116).
 45. GIBBS, GEORGE. Note on the Use of Numerals among the T'sim si-an' (CNAE 155-156).
 46. GATSCHET, A. S. The Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon (Grammar, CNAE 2 [pt. 1, 1890] : 199-711).
 47. RIGGS, S. R. (ed. by J. O. Dorsey). Dakota Grammar, Texts, and Ethnography (Grammar, CNAE 9 [1893] : 3-79).
 48. GODDARD, P. E. Athapaskan (Hupa), in Handbook of American Indian Languages (BBAE 40 [pt. 1, 1911] : 85-158).
 49. SWANTON, JOHN R. Tlingit (BBAE 40 [pt. 1] : 159-204).
 50. — Haida (BBAE 40 [pt. 1] : 205-282).
 51. BOAS, FRANZ. Tsimshian (BBAE 40 [pt. 1] : 283-422).
 52. — Kwakiutl (BBAE 40 [pt. 1] : 423-557).
 53. — Chinook (BBAE 40 [pt. 1] : 559-677).
 54. DIXON, R. B. Maidu (BBAE 40 [pt. 1] : 679-734).
 55. JONES, WM. (revised by Truman Michelson). Algonquian (Fox) (BBAE 40 [pt. 1] : 735-873).
 56. BOAS, FRANZ; and SWANTON, J. R. Dakota (Teton and Santee dialects), with remarks on the Ponca and Winnebago (BBAE 40 [pt. 1] : 875-965).

57. THALBITZER, WILLIAM. Eskimo (BBAE 40 [pt. 1]: 967-1069).
58. SAPIR, EDWARD. The Takelma Language of Southwestern Oregon, in *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (BBAE 40 [pt. 2, 1912]: 1-296).
59. FRACHTENBERG, L. J. Coos (BBAE 40 [pt. 2, 1914]: 297-429).
- 59a. — Siuslawan (Lower Umpqua) (BBAE 40 [pt. 2, 1917]: 431-629).

VI. *Comparative Linguistics*

60. POWELL, J. W. Indian Linguistic Families of America North of Mexico (RBAE 7 [1891]: 1-142).
61. HEWITT, J. N. B. Comparative Lexicology [of Seri and Yuman] (RBAE 17 [1898]: 299*-344*).
62. SWANTON, J. R. Social Condition, Beliefs, and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians (Relationship between the Tlingit and Haida Languages, RBAE 26 [1908]: 472-485).
63. THOMAS, CYRUS; and SWANTON, J. R. Indian Languages of Mexico and Central America, and their Geographical Distribution (BBAE 44 [1911]: 1-108).
64. MICHELSON, TRUMAN. Preliminary Report on the Linguistic Classification of Algonquian Tribes (RBAE 28 [1912]: 221-290 b).

In brief, 370 pages are devoted to linguistic papers of a general nature, 1526 pages to linguistic bibliographies (not counting No. 7), 2612 pages to Indian text (including connected English translations), 3007 pages to lexical material, 2211 pages to grammatical studies, and 382 pages to comparative linguistics. Nor is this all, for a very considerable body of lexical and text material (chiefly songs and short ritualistic texts) is scattered up and down various ethnological monographs (for example, in Miss Fletcher's "Hako Ceremony," Mrs. Stevenson's "Zuñi Indians," J. P. Harrington's "Ethnogeography of the Tewa Indians," and elsewhere). Moreover, there is much unpublished manuscript of a linguistic nature in the hands of the Bureau, some of which has been drawn upon for the published papers.¹ As regards mere bulk, the linguistic

¹ And let us not forget that not a few linguistic papers and monographs published in anthropological journals and in the anthropological series of other institutions were based on material obtained under the auspices of the Bureau.

output of the Bureau is impressive enough, even when allowance is made for a considerable share of material (such as Nos. 6-16) that is intended merely as a help for scientific research. Nor should we forget that lexical and text matter, the indispensable raw material of all linguistic studies, is necessarily a somewhat forbidding item from the quantitative standpoint. The total readable volume of linguistic contributions (aside from translations of texts) boils down, therefore, to hardly more than a fourth of the whole.

How about quality? It is a thankless, certainly a somewhat dangerous, proceeding to pronounce judgment right and left wise-acre-fashion, so much depending on personal bias and the peculiar circumstances attending each publication. Nevertheless it seems safe to say that in quality the Bureau linguistic publications run a very long gamut indeed, extending all the way from the distressing amateurishness of, say, No. 34, to work exemplified, say, in No. 57, of as high a standard of phonetic finish and morphological insight as one could hope to find anywhere in descriptive linguistic literature. As these examples indicate, the general standard has improved with time, as was indeed to be expected on general principles. Yet this is not unreservedly true, for I should consider it beyond dispute that, for instance, J. O. Dorsey's text material (Nos. 18 and 19) can more than hold its own in comparison with much that followed.

Any general criticism of the linguistics of the Bureau should be tempered by three considerations. In the first place, much of the output is the work of men who were either not trained in linguistic methods at all, or, at any rate, did not receive a training rigorous enough to set them the highest desirable standard of accomplishment. Under the circumstances in which the scientific activities of the Bureau were launched, this is perfectly excusable; for most of the trained linguists were and still largely are men devoted

to specialist researches of a more traditional color, — men who shrink from the serious study of languages spoken by mere Indians with the same amusing helplessness that the conventional classicist seems to betray when he gets a whiff of modern ethnological method. The Bureau could not pick and choose, it had to avail itself of the services of such enthusiasts as could be found. In the second place, the languages studied by the Bureau were in most cases a veritable *terra incognita* when first handled by its investigators. It was not, as had already come to be the case among the Semitists and Indogermanists, a question of refined morphologic analyses and of subtle phonetic determinations. The problems were rougher and more fundamental, in many ways all the more fascinating on that account. The vast number of aboriginal American languages had to be roughly compared with one another, and grouped into at least temporarily exclusive "stocks;" the phonetic systems, vocabularies, and structures of these languages had to be painfully worked out point by point; the oral literature of the Indians had to be slowly recorded in the form of texts which might serve as a *bona fide* basis for the grammatical superstructures built out of the raw materials of field-work. The subject of North American linguistics was, when Powell first took the work in hand, a tangled thicket with few discernible trails; now, chiefly through the labors of the Bureau itself, trails have been blazed all through the thicket, and, though there are still many clumps of virgin forest, most of the trees have been felled, and a good part of the land turned over to agricultural uses. Finally, there is a third consideration, in part already anticipated, that makes any direct comparison of American Indian linguistic work with that of, say, most Indogermanic philologists highly misleading. The latter deals chiefly with written records whose accuracy is beyond personal control, the former includes and is further based on field-records for whose accuracy the

Americanist is himself responsible. There is therefore no use contrasting the breathless finesse of a German *Lautschieber* with the relatively rough-and-ready carrying-on of the majority of Indian linguists. One can be sword-maker and swordsman too, but is not likely to be equally clever at both jobs. Anyway, most of us have a shrewd suspicion that many a renowned denizen of the German universities, impressive in his balancing of imponderable phonologic nuances, would find himself sadly up a tree when confronted with the live problems of an intricate Indian language that he was forced to study by pure induction. In spite of the difficulties that we have mentioned, the general level of quality in the linguistic publications of the Bureau must be admitted to be high.

The corner-stone of the linguistic edifice in aboriginal North America, one might almost say of North American anthropology generally, is Powell's "Indian Linguistic Families of America North of Mexico" (No. 60 of the bibliography). Though the work generally passes under Powell's name, it is of course a compilation based on the labors of several members of the Bureau staff. This monumental work, with its appended map, has served, and on the whole still serves, as the basis of all classificatory work in North American linguistics, secondarily (and less justly) in ethnology as well. Despite its inevitable errors of detail, it has proved itself to be an eminently reliable guide. The lines of linguistic cleavage laid down in it still have a fundamental significance, though the interpretation of these lines of cleavage has been somewhat modified by recent research. There can now be no reasonable doubt that the "stocks" of Powell's linguistic map are not all to be taken in the mutually exclusive sense in which he defined them. New syntheses are forced upon us by further investigation, the terrifying complexity disclosed on Powell's map progressively yielding to simplification. On the basis of evidence

already present, and of advance statements whose validity remains to be demonstrated, I should say that the 57 distinct stocks recognized on the revised linguistic map of the Bureau may be expected to re-arrange themselves into perhaps not more than 16, or even less. Always bear in mind, however, that the great divisions recognized by Powell still have significance, only that many of them are now to be understood as major subdivisions of larger linguistic units. While nothing is further from my mind than to minimize the great usefulness of Powell's classification, I may be pardoned for regretting the too definitive and dogmatic form in which it was presented. This has had the effect until recently of discouraging further researches into the problem of linguistic groupings in America. It is always dangerous to erect a formidable structure on a largely negative basis, for one tends to interpret it as a positive and finished accomplishment. However, I would freely grant that the services rendered by Powell's classification have far outweighed its deterrent influence. A thoroughly revised map of linguistic stocks north of Mexico will sooner or later have to be issued; but it is as well not to be too precipitate about this, as the whole subject of the genetic classification of Indian languages is at present in a state of flux.

In reviewing the linguistic publications of the Bureau as a whole, we have a right to ask three leading questions: Is the standard of phonetic accuracy adopted in the recording of the languages adequate? Are the grammars of these languages so presented as to convey a satisfactory notion of the fundamental characteristics of their structure? and, Have various languages been treated from the comparative standpoint, so as to suggest historical perspectives transcending those obtained from the intensive study of particular languages? Let us briefly consider each of these queries.

Early in its career the Bureau outlined a phonetic alphabet, which, as compared with the best that phonetic research at the time had to offer, was quite inadequate, but which was so vast an improvement on the amateurish methods in vogue for recording Indian words, that its adoption must be considered a great step forward in the study of American Indian linguistics. It has undoubtedly done good work in its day, and must be taken as the basis for further improvements. However, as it was framed without any very deep knowledge of the actual phonetic problems presented by American languages, many of which are of exceptional difficulty and complexity in this respect, field investigators soon found it impossible to give an even approximately adequate idea of the requisite phonetic facts without straining its resources. In this way new symbols were added from time to time by various investigators, and the accuracy of linguistic notation, limited naturally by the native abilities of the recorders, grew apace. It is difficult to dispose of the phonetic quality of the series in a word. It is hardly fair to lay stress on the orthographies of some of the earlier works; e.g., Nos. 30-34 and 44. On the other hand, I do not think one could candidly say that much even of the more recent work is as good as we should like to have it (Nos. 18, 52, and 57 probably about represent the high-water mark). The general run of the linguistic papers might be not unfairly described as "reasonably good" in phonetic respects, certainly no better.

Had a really scientific and reasonably complete phonetic alphabet been adopted earlier in the life of the Bureau, I believe the phonetic standard of some of the later linguistic work done under its auspices would have been even higher than it is. Experience shows that a field-worker tends, in his hearing of unfamiliar sounds, to be influenced by the standard phonetic scheme that has made itself at home in his inner ear; he will assimilate

late to this scheme more readily than recognize and record as distinctive elements sounds not already provided for. For this reason the new phonetic scheme adopted by a committee of the American Anthropological Association, and recently published in the "Miscellaneous Collections of the Smithsonian Institution,"¹ is timely, and, let us hope, adequate. I believe that the Bureau cannot do better than adopt it as the standard alphabet for its future publications. While a fetich should not be made of uniformity in orthographic matters, I do not think it is altogether wise to indulge in too many individual vagaries.

It is in morphology that I think the Bureau has done its most valuable linguistic work. Chiefly under the enthusiastic guidance of Boas, we have presented to us in Nos. 48-59 (other sketches, such as Kutenai, Alsea, Siuslaw, and Paiute, are to follow) an excellent set of descriptive analyses of the structures of several Indian languages. How excellent, on the whole, they are, may be best gathered by contrasting them with the conventional grammatical treatment with a Latin bias, that we find in so many of the older Indian grammars (No. 47 is not altogether free from this bias). "The Handbook of American Indian Languages" is, indeed, easily the most significant linguistic achievement of the Bureau; taking it all in all, it probably marks the crest up to the present of research in American Indian linguistics, and at the same time constitutes one of the really important monuments to Boas's versatility as anthropologist. It would be idle to pretend that all are equally good, or that any one, indeed, is altogether perfect. Many valid criticisms could be made of all or most of them; but they certainly do succeed, for all that, in giving a vivid picture of the exuberant

variety and distinctiveness of American Indian linguistic morphology. To the linguistic psychologist and to the comparative philologist alike it is certainly something very like an æsthetic delight to have clearly revealed to him, for instance, two such unique linguistic organisms as those described in Nos. 48 and 51.

One cannot with such enthusiastic affirmation answer the third of our leading questions. Nos. 60 and 63 are really studies in linguistic geography and classification rather than in comparative philology proper, though they constitute a necessary preliminary to the latter type of investigation. No. 61 is a purely negative and rather fruitless type of linguistic research; while No. 62, despite its more positive outlook, is too hesitating and incomplete a presentation of evidence to merit unqualified praise. This leaves No. 64 as the only really serious work yet undertaken by the Bureau in comparative linguistics; and even this, valuable as it is, is too restricted in scope to mark a very notable advance. The truth is, that the Bureau has not yet fairly reached the comparative stage of linguistic work, but is still, and for quite some time to come necessarily will be, mainly concerned with purely descriptive labors. Nevertheless, I do not believe that this almost total lack of emphasis on comparative work is altogether due to the fact that so much remains to be done in the amassing of lexical and text materials and in the analysis of individual morphologies. Comparative work in linguistics, if it is to be of any scientific value, requires a keenly sensitive historical consciousness in the handling of linguistic phenomena. It is precisely the historical interpretation of cultural elements, however, that has up to the recent past been most conspicuously absent in Americanistic work. The lack of linguistic studies of a comparative nature is merely a symptom of this general defect.

E. SAPIR.

¹Phonetic Transcription of Indian Languages, Report of Committee of American Anthropological Association (Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol. 66, no. 6, 1916), 15 pp. and 2 tables.